

Right: Forest fires consumed structures on Western's Copper Mountain Pilot Butte Line Aug. 11.

Far right: Fire flare-ups complicated repairs to structures during a forest fire in the Thermopolis area Aug. 11. Crews from Casper, Cody and Thermopolis worked long hours to repair the system.



Fires can't stop line crews

Cody Field Maintenance Manager **Steve Upton** reported that forest fires fueled by very dry conditions and high winds consumed three structures on Western's Copper Mountain-Pilot Butte 34.5-kV line and one three-pole structure on the Thermopolis-Boysen 115-kV line Aug. 11. The fires also caused extensive damage to a High Plains REA line that feeds station power to Western's Boysen Peak microwave site.


"Crews from Thermopolis and Casper were on site, as well as helicopter pilot **Tim Kennedy** from Huron. Crews worked long hours in adverse conditions and extremely difficult terrain to make repairs to the system," Upton said.

"As line crews were making progress on the damaged structures, the fire flared again and damaged another structure on the 8-mile sec-

tion of the Thermopolis-Boysen 115-kV line, further complicating repairs," he added.

The Cody Substation crew and the Cody Communication Technician worked to maintain communications at Boysen Peak. The fire burnt close to the buildings, but did no damage to the site. However, when station power was lost the emergency generator kept the site functioning throughout the week.

"We used Kennedy's helicopter to assess damage to the lines quickly and taxied personnel to retrieve equipment and materials," Upton said. All repairs to the lines were complete, station power was restored to Boysen Peak and Western's system was once again operating normally by the evening of Aug. 17.

"These crews performed exceptionally well under extreme circumstances. I know they were tired, but they put in a lot of effort to get the job done in a safe and timely manner. It was a super team effort," Upton said. 

Line and substation crew members involved in the Thermopolis fire repair project:

Casper

Mike Leisz
Stefan Schildt

Cody

Roy Beatty
Rod Meyer
Jeff Parker
Marv Willett

Thermopolis

Jim Bandmann
Bill Hanks
Kirk Hellander
Ron Johnson
Rick Schirber